IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1.   (Currently Amended) A method of trading goods and services in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, each trading party trying to strike a trading deal with the user, the user specifying ~~thereof~~ initial requirements for initiating trading in the online market, the method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

executing ~~at least one~~ a trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the initial requirements of the user;

selecting ~~at least one~~ a first trading offer from the trading offers ~~arrived at said step of executing~~;

if a first trading offer is not selected, invoking standalone bilateral negotiations, which stand apart from the trading mechanism, to arrive at customized trading offers, the standalone bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties ~~whose~~ who submitted trading offers ~~were selected at said step of selecting~~;

repeating said ~~steps of~~ executing, and either said selecting~~, and~~ or said invoking ~~until~~ to obtain either said attractive and feasible trading offer or said customized trading offers ~~are arrived at~~, respectively;

evaluating the attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers by a utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service; and

concluding trading deals based on the evaluated attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers, whereby said trading ~~mechanisms~~ mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined.

2.   (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 1, all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference, wherein the ~~step of~~ invoking the standalone bilateral

negotiations comprises ~~the steps of~~:

~~contacting trading parties whose trading offers are selected for the negotiations;~~

agreeing upon a protocol for conducting the <u>standalone</u> negotiations;

exchanging offers as per the agreed upon protocol; and

concluding the ~~negotiation process~~ <u>standalone negotiations</u> as per the agreed upon protocol.

3. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 2<u>, all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference,</u> wherein the ~~step of~~ exchanging offers comprises ~~the steps of~~:

receiving offers from the trading parties;

evaluating the received offers;

generating counter-offers on the basis of evaluated offers;

sending counter-offers to the ~~respective~~ trading parties; and

repeating said ~~steps of~~ receiving, <u>said</u> evaluating, <u>said</u> generating and <u>said</u> sending in accordance with the agreed upon protocol.

4. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 1<u>, all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference,</u> wherein the online market is a regulated online market, the online market being regulated to increase trading efficiency of the online market, the trading efficiency of the online market being governed by the number of trading parties that strike a trading deal.

5. (Currently Amended) A method of <u>automatically</u> trading <u>goods and services</u> in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, each trading party trying to strike a trading deal with the user, the user specifying ~~thereof~~ <u>initial</u> requirements for initiating trading in the online market, the method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

executing ~~at least one~~ <u>a</u> trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the <u>initial</u> requirements of the user, the ~~step~~ <u>executing</u> being performed by or in association with ~~the~~ <u>an online</u> server;

selecting ~~at least one~~ a first trading offer from the trading offers ~~arrived at said step of executing~~, the ~~step~~ selecting being performed by or in association with ~~the~~ an online server;

if a first trading offer is not selected, invoking standalone bilateral negotiations, which stand apart from the trading mechanism, to arrive at customized trading offers, the standalone bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties ~~whose~~ who submitted trading offers ~~were selected at said step of selecting~~, the ~~step~~ invoking being performed by or in association with ~~the~~ an online server;

repeating said ~~steps of~~ executing, and either said selecting~~, and~~ or said invoking ~~until~~ to obtain either said attractive and feasible trading offer or said customized trading offers ~~are arrived at~~, respectively, the ~~step~~ repeating being performed by or in association with ~~the~~ an online server;

evaluating the attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers by a utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service, the ~~step~~ evaluating being performed by or in association with ~~the~~ an online server; and

concluding trading deals based on the evaluated attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers, the ~~step~~ concluding being performed by or in association with ~~the~~ an online server, whereby said trading ~~mechanisms~~ mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined.

6.   (Currently Amended) A method of trading in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, each trading party trying to strike a trading deal with the user, the user specifying thereof requirements for initiating trading in the online market, the method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

executing ~~at least one~~ a trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the initial requirements of the user;

selecting ~~at least one~~ a first trading offer from the trading offers ~~arrived at said step of executing~~;

if a first trading offer is not selected, invoking standalone bilateral negotiations, which stand apart from the trading mechanism, to arrive at customized trading offers, the standalone bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties ~~whose~~ who submitted trading offers ~~were selected at said step of selecting,~~ said ~~step of~~ invoking further comprising:

   ~~contacting trading parties whose trading offers are selected for the negotiations;~~

   agreeing upon a protocol for conducting the standalone negotiations;

   exchanging offers as per the agreed upon protocol; and

   concluding the ~~negotiation process~~ standalone negotiations as per the agreed upon protocol;

repeating said ~~steps of~~ executing, and either said selecting~~, and~~ or said invoking ~~until~~ to obtain either said attractive and feasible trading offer or said customized trading offers ~~are arrived at~~, respectively;

evaluating the attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers by a utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service; and

concluding trading deals based on the evaluated attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers, whereby said trading ~~mechanisms~~ mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined.

7.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] An online computer system suitable for trading goods and services in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, the system connected to a plurality of clients, the user specifying ~~thereof~~ initial requirements for initiating trading in the online market using a client, the online computer system comprising:

   a server for enabling the trading in the online market, the server comprising:

   means for executing ~~at least one~~ a trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the initial requirements of the user;

   means for selecting ~~at least one~~ a first trading offer from the trading offers ~~arrived at said~~

~~step of executing~~;

if a first trading offer is not selected, means for invoking standalone bilateral negotiations, which stand apart from the trading mechanism, to arrive at customized trading offers, the standalone bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties ~~whose~~ who submitted trading offers ~~were selected at said step of selecting~~;

means for evaluating the attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers by a utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service; and

means for concluding trading deals based on the evaluated attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers, whereby said trading mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined.

8.   (Currently Amended) The system as recited in claim 7, all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference, wherein the server further comprises:

a repository containing information related to the initial requirements of trading parties;

a repository containing information related to [[the]] past trading deals; and

a repository containing information related to the trading parties.

9.   (Currently Amended) The system as recited in claim 7, all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference, wherein the means for invoking the bilateral negotiations comprises:

~~means for contacting trading parties whose trading offers are selected for the negotiations~~;

means for agreeing upon a protocol for conducting the standalone negotiations;

means for exchanging offers as per the agreed upon protocol; and

means for concluding the ~~negotiation process~~ standalone negotiations as per the agreed upon protocol.

10.   (Currently Amended) The system as recited in claim 9, all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference, wherein the means for exchanging offers comprises:

      means for receiving offers from the trading parties;

      means for evaluating the received offers;

      means for generating counter-offers on the basis of evaluated offers; and

      means for sending counter-offers to the ~~respective~~ trading parties.

11.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] An online computer system suitable for trading goods and services in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, the online computer system connected to at least one server, the online computer system comprising: a plurality of clients, the plurality of clients enabling the trading in the online market, each client comprising:

      means for specifying [[the]] initial requirements, the initial requirements being specified by the user to initiate trading in the online market;

      means for executing ~~at least one~~ a trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the initial requirements of the user;

      means for selecting ~~at least one~~ a first trading offer from the trading offers ~~arrived at said step of executing~~;

      if a first trading offer is not selected, means for invoking standalone bilateral negotiations, which stand apart from the trading mechanism, to arrive at customized trading offers, the standalone bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties ~~whose~~ who submitted trading offers ~~were selected at said step of selecting~~;

      means for evaluating the attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers by a utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service; and

      means for concluding trading deals based on the evaluated attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers, whereby said trading mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined.

12.   (Currently Amended) A ~~computer~~ program ~~product suitable for trading in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, the computer program product~~ storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by said machine to perform a method of trading goods and services in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, each trading party trying to strike a trading deal with the user, the user specifying initial requirements for initiating trading in the online market, said method comprising:

~~program instruction means for~~ executing ~~at least one~~ a trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the initial requirements of the user;

~~program instruction means for~~ selecting ~~at least one~~ a first trading offer from the trading offers ~~arrived at said step of executing~~;

if a first trading offer is not selected, ~~program instruction means for~~ invoking standalone bilateral negotiations, which stand apart from the trading mechanism, to arrive at customized trading offers, the standalone bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties ~~whose~~ who submitted trading offers ~~were selected at said step of selecting~~;

~~program instruction means for~~ evaluating the attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers by a utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service; and

~~program instruction means for~~ concluding trading deals based on the evaluated attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers, whereby said trading mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined.

13.   (Currently Amended) The ~~computer~~ program ~~product~~ storage device as recited in claim 12, all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference, wherein the ~~program instruction means for~~ invoking the standalone bilateral negotiations comprises:

~~program instruction means for contacting parties whose trading offers are selected for the negotiations;~~

~~program instruction means for~~ agreeing upon a protocol for conducting the <u>standalone</u> negotiations;

~~program instruction means for~~ exchanging offers as per the agreed upon protocol; and

~~program instruction means for~~ concluding the ~~negotiation process~~ <u>standalone negotiations</u> as per the agreed upon protocol.

14.   (Currently Amended) The computer program ~~product~~ <u>storage device</u> as recited 13<u>, all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference,</u> wherein the ~~program instruction means for~~ exchanging offers comprises:

~~program instruction means for~~ receiving offers from the trading parties;

~~program instruction means for~~ evaluating offers received from the trading parties;

~~program instruction means for~~ generating counter-offers on the basis of evaluated offers; and

~~program instruction means for~~ sending the generated counter-offers to ~~respective~~ <u>the</u> trading parties.

15.   (Currently Amended) A ~~computer~~ program ~~product suitable for trading in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, the computer program product~~ <u>storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by said machine to perform a method of trading goods and services in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, each trading party trying to strike a trading deal with the user, the user specifying initial requirements for initiating trading in the online market, said method</u> comprising:

~~program instruction means for~~ executing ~~at least one~~ <u>a</u> trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the <u>initial</u> requirements of the user, ~~further details of the program instructions~~ <u>said executing being</u> associated with the ~~server~~ <u>machine</u>;

~~program instruction means for~~ selecting ~~at least one~~ a first trading offer from the trading offers ~~arrived at said step of executing,~~ ~~further details of the program instructions~~ said selecting being associated with the ~~server~~ machine;

if a first trading offer is not selected, ~~program instruction means for~~ invoking standalone bilateral negotiations, which stand apart from the trading mechanism, to arrive at customized trading offers, the standalone bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties ~~whose~~ who submitted trading offers ~~were selected at said step of selecting,~~ ~~further details of the program instructions~~ said invoking being associated with the ~~server~~ machine;

~~program instruction means for~~ evaluating the attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers by a utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service, ~~further details of the program instructions~~ said evaluating being associated with the ~~server~~ machine; and

~~program instruction means for~~ concluding trading deals based on the evaluated attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers ~~further details of the program instructions,~~ said concluding being associated with the ~~server~~ machine, whereby said trading mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined.

16.   (Currently Amended) A ~~computer~~ program ~~product suitable for trading in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, the computer program product~~ storage device readable by client machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by said client machine to perform a method of trading goods and services in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, each trading party trying to strike a trading deal with the user, the user specifying initial requirements for initiating trading in the online market, said method comprising:

~~program instruction means for~~ executing ~~at least one~~ a trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the initial requirements of the user, ~~further details of the program instructions~~ said executing being

associated with the client <u>machine</u>;

~~program instruction means for~~ selecting ~~at least one~~ <u>a first</u> trading offer from the trading offers ~~arrived at said step of executing,~~ ~~further details of the program instructions~~ <u>said selecting being</u> associated with the client <u>machine</u>;

~~program instruction means for~~ <u>if a first trading offer is not selected,</u> ~~program instruction means for~~ invoking <u>standalone</u> bilateral negotiations<u>, which stand apart from the trading mechanism,</u> to arrive at customized trading offers, the <u>standalone</u> bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties ~~whose~~ <u>who submitted</u> trading offers ~~were selected at said step of selecting,~~ ~~further details of the program instructions~~ <u>said invoking being</u> associated with the client <u>machine</u>

~~program instruction means for~~ evaluating <u>the attractive and feasible offer or the</u> customized trading offers <u>by a utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service,</u> ~~further details of the program instructions~~ <u>said evaluating being</u> associated with the client <u>machine</u>; and

~~program instruction means for~~ concluding trading deals based on the <u>evaluated attractive and feasible offer or the customized</u> trading offers ~~further details of the program instructions,~~ ~~further details of the program instructions~~ <u>said concluding being</u> associated with the client machine<u>, whereby said trading mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined</u>.

17.   (Currently Amended) A ~~computer~~ program ~~product suitable for trading in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, the computer program product~~ <u>storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by said machine to perform a method of trading goods and services in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, each trading party trying to strike a trading deal with the user, the user specifying initial requirements for initiating trading in the online market, said method</u> comprising:

~~program instruction means for~~ executing ~~at least one~~ a trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the initial requirements of the user;

~~program instruction means for~~ selecting ~~at least one~~ a first trading offer from the trading offers submitted by the trading parties;

if a first trading offer is not selected, ~~program instruction means for~~ invoking standalone bilateral negotiations, which stand apart from the trading mechanism, to arrive at customized trading offers, the standalone bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties ~~whose~~ who submitted trading offers ~~were selected, program instruction means for~~ said invoking ~~at least one bilateral negotiations~~ comprising:

~~program instruction means for contacting trading parties whose trading offers are selected for the negotiations;~~

~~program instruction means for~~ agreeing upon a protocol for conducting the standalone negotiations;

~~program instruction means for~~ exchanging offers as per the agreed upon protocol; and

~~program instruction means for~~ concluding the ~~negotiation process~~ standalone negotiations as per the agreed upon protocol;

~~program instruction means for~~ evaluating the attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers by a utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service; and

~~program instruction means for~~ concluding trading deals based on the evaluated attractive and feasible offer or the customized trading offers, whereby said trading mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined.